

The initiative

Heriot-Watt Engage (HW Engage) is an initiative to promote, support and stimulate public engagement activities at Heriot-Watt University, with the overarching aim to create a culture where the research sector and researchers themselves value public engagement as an important activity. The initiative was created in 2013 within the Centre for Academic Leadership and Development and as a part of the Beltane Public Engagement Network.



Benefits

HW Engage responds to the University's Strategic Plan 2013–18 on maximising knowledge exchange, as well as addressing its core values such as "pride and belonging" by raising the profile and positive image of the institution internally and externally. It enables researchers to:

- **Have a meaningful engagement with the public** where both academics and members of the public learn about each other
- **Develop their professional skills** including communication and teaching by providing context to try new ways of presenting their work
- **Get feedback about their research** from non-academic audiences
- **Challenge themselves** by acting out with their comfort zone of academic institutions
- **Build networks** for further research and public engagement initiatives

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The following areas of the Concordat are represented in the HW Engage programme.

Principle 3: Clause 3 – “Researchers need support to develop the communication and other skills that they will need to be both effective researchers and highly skilled professionals in whatever field they choose to enter”

Principle 3: Clause 9 – “...increasing the skill and effectiveness of researchers in key areas such as writing for publication or communicating with a wider audience.”

HW Engage

A highly successful initiative to promote, support and stimulate public engagement activities at Heriot-Watt University.

Impacts

In 2014, HW Engage led successful applications for two exhibits at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, placing Heriot-Watt research amongst the most exciting cutting-edge research in the UK.

The annual 'Principal's Public Engagement Prize' has seen a steady rise in the number of applications since its inception. The prize recognises an individual or team's ability to reach new audiences not already engaged with research, demonstrating a lasting impact on the public. To date (October 2014), the award has provided £12,000 prize funding for further public engagement activities.



Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

This Concordat was instrumental to the creation of HW Engage. The initiative works in alliance with the key principles outlined by the Concordat, including "UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement".

- Researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.
- Researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities.
- The signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector's progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.